Claims

What is claimed is:

1.   A system for managing file folders in a file storage facility having a plurality of storage sections, comprising:

a unique file identifier associated with each file folder in the file storage facility;

a computer;

a database, coupled to the computer, for storing sets of data for each file folder representing its file identifier, physical thickness, storage section location, and content information for each file folder[,according to];

updating means for updating the physical thickness, storage section location, and content information whenever the information changes;

means for determining, for each storage section, whenever the total thickness for all file folders within a storage section exceeds a threshold percentage of the available storage space for the storage section; and

purging means, responsive to the determination that the threshold percentage is being exceeded for a section, for purging at least some file folders within the section;

wherein the purging reduces the total thickness for all file folders below the threshold percentage.

2.   A system for managing file folders in file storage facility as recited in claim 1, wherein the updating means includes a logging station for identifying each file folder by its unique identifier and means for measuring the physical thickness of the file folder.

3.   A system for managing file folders in file storage facility as recited in claim 2, wherein the logging station includes an electronic scale for measuring the physical weight of the file folder needing updating and means for converting a physical weight measurement into a physical thickness value.

4. A system for managing file folders in file storage facility as recited in claim 2, wherein the unique identifier is in the form a bar-coded number.

5. A system for managing file folders in a file storage facility as recited in claim 2, further including a label printer in logging station for printing bar-coded labels.

6. A system for managing file folders in file storage facility as recited in claim 2, wherein the unique identifier is in the form a coded radio frequency identification tag.

7. A system for managing file folders in file storage facility as recited in claim 2, wherein the means for determining is a computer program operating on the database data supplied by the logging station.

8. A system for managing file folders in file storage facility as recited in claim 2, wherein the means for determining is a physical measurement of the files in a storage section.

9. A system for managing file folders in file storage facility as recited in claim 1, wherein the purging means includes creating a listing of file folders to be purged based on at least one computer algorithm.

10. A system for managing file folders in a file storage facility as recited in claim 9, wherein the computer algorithm for purging is based on content information for the file folders in a storage section.

11. A system for managing file folders in a file storage facility as recited in claim 9, wherein the computer algorithm for purging is based on file usage history for the file folders in a storage section.

12.   A system for managing file folders in a file storage facility as recited in claim 9, wherein the computer algorithm for purging is based on physical size for the file folders in a storage section.

5   13.   A system for managing file folders in a file storage facility as recited in claim 9, wherein the computer algorithm for purging is applied to each storage section independently of the other of said plurality of storage sections.

14.   A system for managing file folders in a file storage facility as recited in claim 9,
10   wherein the computer algorithm for purging is for determining which files are least likely to be requested independently of the other files.

15.   A system for managing file folders in a file storage facility as recited in claim 9, wherein the computer algorithm for purging is for determining which files are least likely to
15   be requested compared with other files in a storage section.

16.   A system for managing file folders in a file storage facility as recited in claim 9, wherein the computer algorithm for purging is for determining firstly which file are least likely to be requested independently of other files in a storage section and secondly which
20   files are least likely to be requested compared with other files in the storage section.

17.   A system for managing file folders in file storage facility as recited in claim 1, wherein the purging means includes purge list generating means for periodically generating a list of files that may be purged from the storage sections and printing means for printing out the list
25   of files for purging.

18.   A system for managing file folders in file storage facility as recited in claim 1, wherein the file folders are x-ray film jackets.

19.   A system for managing file folders in file storage facility as recited in claim 1, wherein the file folders are in terminal digit filing order.

20.   A system for managing file folders in file storage facility as recited in claim 1, wherein the file folders are color-coded.

21.   A system for managing file folders in file storage facility as recited in claim 1, wherein the purged file folders are removed to an off-site storage facility.

22.   A system for managing file folders in file storage facility as recited in claim 1, wherein the purged file folders are removed first to an intermediate file storage facility before being removed to an off-site storage facility.

23.   A method for managing file folders in a file storage facility having a plurality of storage sections, comprising the steps:

assigning a unique file identifier to each file folder in the file storage facility;

tracking on a computer the physical thickness, storage section location, and content information for each file folder, according to its file identifier;

updating the physical thickness, storage section location, and content information whenever the information changes;

determining, for each storage section, when the total thickness for all file folders within a file section exceeds a threshold percentage of the available storage space for the storage section; and

in response to the determination of the threshold being exceeded for a section, purging selected file folders within the section to reduce the total thickness for all file folders below the threshold percentage.

5   24.   A system for managing the storage of medical record files in a file storage facility including a set of shelves, divided into sections, for the medical record files, comprising,

a shelf database for storing information corresponding to each shelf section in the file storage facility utilized for storing the medical record files, including at least a unique shelf section identification code for the each shelf section, an indication of the linear dimension of 10   the shelf section, and an indication of the current fullness of said shelf section;

a file database for storing information corresponding to each medical record file including at least a file identifier, the current thickness of the file, and the a shelf section location for the file;

means for updating the current thickness for a file in the database when the thickness 15   of a file changes;

means for determining the current fullness of the shelf section by comparing the linear dimension of the shelf section with total thickness of all files stored on the shelf;

means for determining when the current fullness of the shelf section exceeds a threshold value;

20   a file usage algorithm for determining which files are least likely to be requested;

means for generating a list of files that may be removed from a shelf section according to said file usage algorithm to reduce the current fullness of the shelf section below the threshold value;

wherein the current fullness for each shelf in the file storage facility is maintained 25   within a specified fullness range.

25.   A computer-implemented method for handling pending file requests by a plurality of requesters for a file stored in a file storage facility comprising the steps:

recording the pending requests for the file in a file tracking database;

printing a routing slip to accompany the file to the first requestor;

logging the file out of the file storage facility in the file tracking database;

physically transferring the requested file to the locale of the first requestor;

5   electronically identifying when the file has reentered the file storage facility;

electronically flagging the file prior to its being refiled in the file storage facility;

printing a new routing slip for the next of said plurality of requesters; and

physically moving the file to the locale of the second of said plurality of requesters.

10   26.   The computer-implemented method of claim 25, further including the step of tracking the time the file is logged out of the file storage facility.

27.   The computer-implemented method of claim 25, further including the step of electronically scanning a selected portion of a requested file folder and distributing the 15   selected portion to fulfill the pending request.

28.   A method of manufacturing color-coded file folders, comprising the steps:

receiving color-coded printing information from a computer database pertaining to what needs to be printed on the file folder;

20   supplying the color-coded printing information to a digital color printing press;

printing the color coding information directly on the substrate of file folder stock in the digital color printing press;

die cutting a file folder from the file folder stock;

folding and gluing the file folder; and

25   receiving the complete printed file folder.

29.   The method of manufacturing color-coded file folders as recited in claim 28, wherein the printed file folder substrate is color-coded.

30. The method of manufacturing file folders as recited in claim 28, wherein the printed substrate includes at least a pair numerals for terminal digit filing.

31. The method of manufacturing file folders as recited in claim 28, wherein the printed substrate includes a bar-code.

32. The method of manufacturing color-coded file folders as recited in claim 28, further including inserting a radio frequency identification tag in the file folder stock prior to the step of folding and gluing.

33. The method of manufacturing color-coded file folders as recited in claim 28, wherein the printing information is supplied from a medical data computer and the file created is a medical file folder.

34. The method of manufacturing color-coded file folders as recited in claim 28, wherein the printing information is supplied from a medical data computer and the file created is a medical x-ray jacket.

35. The method of manufacturing color-coded file folders as recited in claim 33, wherein the color-coded medical file folder is created prior to a new patient's visit to a medical treatment facility.

36. A method of manufacturing file folders, comprising the steps:
    printing information on a blank file folder substrate stock;
    cutting a blank file folder, including the printed information, from file folder stock;
    inserting a radio frequency identification tag in the file folder; and
    folding and gluing the file folder to form a completed file folder.